Grice, relevance and speaker's meaning[*]

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1 Introduction

My object in this paper is to analyse Grice's notion of *utterer's occasion meaning* (or "non-natural meaning") *in the absence of an audience.* I shall refer here to those particular utterances which could be said to mean something, but which are not addressed to any actual or definite person, or set of persons, who are intended to produce an effect or response, as the utterer may wish. Cases of these types of utterance are found continually in everyday life. Examples are posting notices, leaving messages, entries in diaries, rehearsing a speech, etc.

This aspect was considered by Grice, though rather briefly, in his paper "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions" [1]. Grice defined the notion of "meaning" in terms of the different intentions that the utterer may have, when he addresses his utterances to an audience. His analysis of *utterer's meaning* has been reviewed by many philosophers since he first proposed it. Because of the complexity reached in his formula, some of them reject it and some others accept it but with amendments, offering alternative reformulations. But, as Anita Avramides says in her book *Meaning and Mind*:

> Many discuss Grice's work or criticize it without clarifying how they interpret the work. (...) We need to see just what the analysis offers us as a supplementation to or part of an overall "theory of meaning". Understanding how the analysis works should, I believe, make philosophers more open to what it can tell us about meaning. Many criticize the analysis for its complexity, but we must be careful not to close our eyes to the problems that the complexity is designed to meet. It is easy to sweep aside a complex analysis, harder to come up with an alternative way of meeting the problems.[2]

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[1] 1969, and also 1989.

[2] Chapter 2, p. 39.

After considering several objections to his definition and analysis of "utterer's occasion meaning", Grice proposes a reformulation of it, which could accommodate the sort of cases mentioned above, and which were presented as counterexamples to his analysis, i.e. those cases in which the speaker produces an utterance without having an actual hearer, or hearers, or intending it to be addressed to a potential audience at a future time.

The reformulation suggested allows for the possibility that the audience could not be present or could not be specified at the time of the production of the utterance.

My intention here is to suggest a different approach to the analysis of this particular type of utterances, according to the framework of relevance theory, as proposed by D. Sperber and D. Wilson (1986).

2 Grice and "utterer's occasion meaning" and the absence of an audience

The definition of *utterer's occasion meaning* (or "non-natural meaning") proposed by Grice is as follows:

> Note: S stands for speaker or utterer, x for any expression, A for audience or hearer

(d1) "S meant something by uttering x" is true if and only if, for some A, S uttered x intending:

(1) A to produce a particular response r.
(2) A to recognize that S intends (1).
(3) A to fulfil (1) on the basis of his fulfilment of (2).[3]

That is:

(d2) "S meant something by uttering x" is true if and only if, for some A, S uttered x intending:

(1) A to produce r.
(2) A to recognize that S intends A to produce r.
(3) A to produce r on the basis of A's recognition of the fact that S intends A to produce r .

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[3] Grice 1964, p. 151. And also Grice 1989, p. 92.

Grice then presents us with the following question: What happens when we find the speaker uttering x in the absence of an audience? And he gives us some examples of this situation, which he groups in three sets:

a. x may be addressed to the utterer himself or some other particular audience who may encounter it now or later. For instance, entries in a diary or posting notices.

b. x is not addressed to any actual audience, but the utterer intends to address it, at a future time, to some particular audience. That is, at the time of uttering x, the utterer thinks he is addressing x to some imagined audience. For instance, rehearsing.

c. x is not thought to be addressed to any actual audience or any imagined audience. That is, there is not any intended audience at all. But, were it the case that there would be a possible indefinite kind of audience under certain circumstances, the utterer produces x intending it to cause some effect in that audience. For instance, soliloquizing.[4]

The list of examples of these audienceless cases which Avramides provides is larger than Grice's list, and she divides them into two categories: "those in which the speaker produces his utterance with the intention that some person may encounter it either at the time of the utterance or in the future; and those in which the speaker produces his utterance with no audience-directed intention whatever" [5]:

a. Entries in diaries,
b. Rehearsing a part in a projected conversation or speech,
c. Silent thinking,
d. Writing notes to clarify a problem,
e. Soliloquies,
f. Leaving a note for a friend on the off chance that he will stop by,
g. Muttering, "This is an incredible view," on a lone hike on a Grand Canyon trail,
h. A sign that says, "Private Property, Keep Out",

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[4] Grice 1964, p. 174. And also Grice 1989, p. 113. In this category, Avramides places examples (c), (d) and (e) from her list (p. 65).

[5] Avramides 1989, p. 64.

i. A purist typing out "Snow is white" as an exercise in saying only true things,

j. A science teacher, realizing that he has a naive, over-zealous, eager-to-please student in his class, takes delight while alone in saying aloud, 'The earth is the farthest planet from the sun, and the sun revolves around it'.[6]

Schiffer also groups all these different cases into two categories, but he proposes different, though parallel, examples: "(a) Those in which S utters x because of the possibility of producing a certain response in some person, or type of person, and (a) those cases in which S utters x without having (or without seeming to have) any audience-directed intention at all"[7]:

(a.1) S leaves a note on the door telling his mother-in-law that he will be away

(a.2) S records in his private diary that his mother-in-law...

(a.3) S posts a sign saying "Private Property. Keep out".

(b.1) A philosopher, alone and in the privacy of his study, writes down some notes, determined to solve some philosophical problem.

(b.2) A man, during his deliberations about whether to marry Rose, makes a list of her pros and cons.

(b.3) A sadistic lieutenant, realizing he has in his command a naive and overzealous private, takes delight, while alone, in saying aloud, "Private Goodfellow, run your bayonet through your abdomen, and look sharp about it!", knowing that were he to utter this in Goodfellow's presence, he would do just that.

(b.4) A purist, determined never to produce a false sentence, practises on his typewriter by typing the sentence "Snow is white".

I would like to suggest, with respect to Grice's category (a), that we could consider those cases mentioned there as belonging to two different sets:

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[6] Avramides 1989, p. 64.

[7] Schiffer 1972, p. 73.

(a.i) those in which S writes some notes in his diary, and (a.ii) those in which S posts a notice [8]. Both Avramides and Schiffer gather their examples in the same category as well. The reason why I would like to do so is that these two kinds of utterance are very different if we consider who is the intended audience: in (a.i), the utterance is intended to be addressed to the utterer himself, and in (a.ii) the utterance is addressed to somebody else. So, the utterances are addressed either to the speaker himself or to the audience, but not to both of them in the same way and at the same time. Similarly, Avramides's first category (the speaker produces his utterance intending it to be addressed either to a present hearer or to a future hearer) could be subdivided into two sets, according to the same idea. Let us see some examples for set (a.ii):

e1: we have a picture in which we can see a man in a train. We can see that this man is asleep. We can guess that his intention is to go to Sidcup. We can guess as well that he had the intention of having a short sleep during the trip, because he took the precaution of hanging on himself a sign saying "Please, wake me at Sidcup".[9]

So, we could say that this man, the utterer, addressed x to some audience A with some intention I. His utterance has been addressed to a very particular possible A, or type of A, let us say in this case to other possible passengers in that train who may travel with him in the next seats, and who may see his notice.

However, if perhaps this example sounds odd, we can take another example:

e2: the case of a gardener, in charge of a park, who posts a notice saying "Keep off the grass" to avoid his beloved grass suffering any damage caused by any "malignant walking human being".

Similarly, in this example, we see that the utterer is addressing his utterance to a particular audience, let us say, to those who might visit the park. But this is not the kind of utterance which the utterer addresses to himself to keep in mind that he does or doesn't want to perform a particular action.

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[8] "a) Utterances for which the utterer thinks there may (now or later) be an audience. *U* may think that some particular person, for example, himself at a future date in the case of a diary entry, may (but also may not) encounter *U*'s utterance; or *U* may think that there may or may not be some person or other who is or will be an auditor of his utterance." (Grice 1964, p. 174. And also Grice 1989. p. 113).

[9] This example has been taken from Gaynor Ramsey 1987. *Images. Longman Intermediate Speaking Skills*. Longman, London.

Let us take now the other situation, (a.i) when the utterer writes notes in his own diary. A diary is something very private. Normally one uses it to write those messages which are likely to be forgotten in the future, and it is not something that one would normally like to have read by other people. Let us consider these cases:

e3: we buy a diary, let us say a college diary, with notes for those events which may be of interest for students, with dates for the beginning and ending of terms, departmental telephone numbers, libraries timetables, etc.

All that information is already there. The editor, S for our purposes, put it there, as part of the data which could be stored in a student's diary. That sort of notation is indeed addressed to any student who may be interested in it and may want to buy it. But a rather different matter are those private notations which students may want to keep in their college diary, and which are not for public viewing. They cannot be said to be addressed to the student himself or to anybody else at the same time, or in the same way. Let us look at another diary example:

e4: Peter writes in his diary: '25 D: J/ DIY. compl guide useless p. M/ knitting n.' By this, he means "For Christmas Day I intend to buy as John's present a book titled "DIY. The complete guide for useless people", and as Mary's present knitting needles"

In writing this, Peter's intention is to remind himself of those presents which he wants to buy for John and Mary for that special date. Obviously, Peter wouldn't like John and Mary to discover which are his intended presents for them. Again, we cannot say that Peter wrote this message in his diary addressing it to himself or to somebody else. And also, in the way Peter writes his notes, using abbreviations which could not be said to be recognizable for everybody, we find another reason to maintain that his utterance is intended to be addressed only to Peter himself.

After considering these examples, I would like to suggest that for our analysis it would be better to separate them in two different sets.

Thus, Grice's analysis, after several modifications caused by the consideration of different problems, and the necessity of accommodating the counterexamples found at every stage, appears as follows:[10]

(d3) "S meant by uttering x that * p" (= "S utters x intending p") is true if and only if (there is PA) (there is f) (there is c):[11]

(1) S uttered x intending x *to be such that* anyone who is PA would think that:
(1.1) x has f.
(1.2) f is correlated in way c with believing (/*ing) that p.
(1.3) (∃ PA') S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA' would think, via thinking (1.1) and (1.2), that S believes (/*) that p.
(i.e., S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA' would think, via thinking that x has f and that f is correlated in way c with believing (/*ing) that p, that S believes (*) that p.)
(1.4) In view of (1.3), S believes (*) that p.

And

(2) (operative only in certain substituends for *)
S uttered x intending that, *should there actually be* anyone who is PA, he would, via thinking 1.4, himself believe (*) that p.

And

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[10] But first note that PA and PA' are properties of possible audiences. As Grice suggests, "for a S to mean something it will have to be possible to identify the value of ϕ [PA] (which may be quite indeterminate) which S has in mind" (Grice 1969, p. 175. And also Grice 1989, p. 114).

Note as well that "we need to use both ϕ and ϕ', since we do not wish to require that U should intend his possible A to think of U's possible A under the same description as S does himself. (Grice 1969, p. 176. Also Grice 1989, p. 114)

Finally,
f stands for features of utterances,
c, modes of correlation (such as iconic, associative, conventional),
*, believe or think, and
*+ is to be read as * (believe or think) if clause 2 is operative, and as "think that S * (thinks or believes)" if clause 2 is nonoperative.

[11] For a discussion about the relation between x, f, c and p, see Ruth Kempson 1975, pp. 138-141, 147-152)

(3) It is not the case that, for some inference-element e, S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA will both:
(3.1) Rely on e in coming to *+ that p.
(3.2) Think that (∃ PA'): S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA' will come to *+ that p *without* relying on E.

This reformulation could be simplified, for our purposes, in the following way:

(d4) "S meant by uttering x that * p" is true if and only if:

(1) S uttered x intending x to be such that anyone who is PA would think that:
(1.1) S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA' would think that S believes that p.
(1.2) In view of (1.1) S believes that p.

And

(2) S uttered x intending that, should there actually be anyone who is PA, he would via (1.2) himself believe that p.

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inference element e, S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA will both:
(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that p.
(3.2) Think that S intends x to be such that anyone who is PA' will come to think that p without relying on e.[12]

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[12] Anita Avramides takes instead of Grice's version, Schiffer's version of the analysis of speaker's meaning, based in turn on Grice's analysis, to refer to these cases. She offers the following reformulation:

> "S meant that p by uttering x if and only if S uttered x intending thereby to realize a certain state of affairs E that S intends to be such that if E, then:
> (1) if anyone who has a certain property F (e.g., reads the diary or the note or the sign) knows that E obtains, that person will know that S knows that E obtains;
> (2) if anyone who is F knows that E obtains, that person will know that (1); and so on;
> (3) if anyone who is F knows that E obtains, that person will know (or believe), and know that S knows (or believes), that E is conclusive (or at

Let us see if (d4) works, using some of the examples given by Grice. We can start with one which belongs to the first group.

e2. (a.i) The gardener and his "Keep off the grass" sign.

That is,

"The gardener (S), by uttering 'Keep off the grass (x)', meant that nobody should step on the grass (p)" is true if and only if:

(1) The gardener utters 'Keep off the grass' intending this to be such that any passer-by would think that:
(1.1) the gardener intends his sign to be such that he (a passer-by') would think that the gardener believes that nobody should step on the grass.
(1.2) In view of (1.1), the gardener believes that nobody should step on the grass.

And

(2) The gardener uttered 'Keep off the grass' intending that, should there actually be any passer-by, the latter would via (1.2) believe that the gardener thinks that nobody should step on the grass.

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inference element e, the gardener intends his sign to be such that any passer-by will both:
(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that the gardener thinks that nobody should step on the grass.

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least good) evidence that S uttered x with:
(a) the primary intention that there be some p such that S's utterance of x causes in anyone who is F the activated belief that p/p (t) (i.e., the activated belief that p for which he intends A to the *truth-supporting reasons* that p);
(b) the intention that satisfaction of (a) be achieved at least in part by the belief that x is related in a certain way R to the believe that p, and
(c) the intention to realize E; and finally
(4) if anyone who is F knows that E obtains, that person will know that S knows that (3); and so on.

(3.2) Think that the gardener intends his sign to be such that he (a passer-by') will come to think that the gardener thinks that nobody should step on the grass without relying on e.

In this case, we could say that, although it is hard to arrive at an understanding of what the results are, the formula seems to work with this example, but it doesn't seem to when we take e4 (situation (a.ii)):

> "Peter (S), by uttering '25 D: J/DIY...' (x) meant that 'For Christmas Day I intend to buy...' (p)" is true if and only if:

(1) Peter (S) uttered '25th December...' intending it to be such that a certain person who may read it (PA) -i.e. Peter himself (S)- would think that:

(1.1) Peter (S) intends his notes to be such that he (PA = S) would think that he (S) thinks that for Christmas Day he (S) intends to buy...

(1.2) In view of (1.1), Peter (S) believes that for Christmas Day he (S) intends to buy...

And

(2) Peter (S) uttered his notes intending that, should there actually be anyone who may read them (PA) -i.e. Peter himself (S)- he (PA = S) would, via (1.2), believe that for Christmas Day he (S) intends to buy...

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inferential element e, Peter (S) intends his notes to be such that anyone who may read them (PA) -i.e. Peter himself (S) will both:

(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that for Christmas Day he (S) intends to buy...

(3.2) Think that he (S) intends his notes to be such that anyone who may read them (PA) -i.e. Peter' himself (S)- will come to think that for Christmas Day he (S) intends to buy... without relying on e.

Thus, according to the formula, we could state something difficult to maintain, i.e. the fact that the utterer, in reading his notes, will *think that* he *thinks that* he has something to do (to buy the presents or whatever). And moreover, in view of all that, that is, *thinking that* he *thinks that* he has something to do, he *will believe that* he has that thing to do. Also, as M. Black (1972) states, it is very difficult to uphold the idea that when the speaker writes his notes, and reviews them later, he is proposing to himself a reason for performing that particular action.[13]

In this case we could consider the possibility that the utterer, when looking over his notes again, after a certain period of time, may have completely different assumptions about what he wants or intends to do in the future. For instance, let us say that the utterer, Peter, wrote his notes two months before Christmas. We will call him in that particular circumstance and time 'Peter$_1$'. And let us suppose that he reads his notes again just a week before Christmas. We will call him in that particular circumstance and time 'Peter$_2$'. In this way we make a distinction between two different mental states in the utterer: one, when he wrote his notes about what he intended to do in a future time; and two, when he reads them again after a period of time, i.e., in that future time which he had referred to. We can perfectly suppose that during that time he may have changed his mind with respect to those intentions that he had in the past (or he may have not, of course). Or also, perhaps he may have forgotten which his intentions were at that time. So we could say that Peter$_2$ is Peter$_1$'s audience, and in this way we could also say that Peter$_1$ is informing Peter$_2$ (i.e. the utterer is "informing himself" because he is his own "audience") about which assumptions and intentions he had.

This is precisely the idea that Schiffer has in mind when he refers to the diary example: the utterer writes down some notes about how often he receives his mother-in-law's visits.

So, after all these considerations, in this case Grice's analysis, following (d4), seems to work somehow:

> "Peter$_1$ (S), by uttering '25 D: J/DIY...' (x) meant that 'For Christmas Day I intend to buy...' (p)" is true if and only if:

(1) Peter$_1$ writes '25th December...' intending it to be such that he, some weeks later (Peter$_2$), will think that:
(1.1) he, when he wrote his notes (Peter$_1$), intended them to be such that he, some weeks later (Peter$_2$), would think that he, when he wrote his notes (Peter$_1$), thought that for Christmas Day he (Peter$_1$) intended to buy...

(1.2) In view of (1.1), Peter$_1$ believes that for Christmas Day he intends to buy...

And

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[13] Max Black 1972, p. 264.

(2) Peter$_1$ writes his notes intending that, should the case be that he , some weeks later (Peter$_2$), read them, he (Peter$_2$) would via (1.2) believe that for Christmas Day he, when he wrote them (Peter$_1$) intended to buy...

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inferential element e, Peter$_1$ intends his notes to be such that if he, some weeks later (Peter$_2$), might read them, will both:
(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that for Christmas Day he, when he wrote them (Peter$_1$) intended to buy...
(3.2) Think that he, when he wrote them (Peter$_1$) intended his notes to be such that if he, some weeks later (Peter$_2$), might read them, he will come to think that for Christmas Day he intended to buy... without relying on e.

That is, in this case we could say that Peter (Peter$_2$) will, at the time he reads his notes again, become aware of what intentions he had in the past. He will remember what plans about a particular future time he had in mind. He, then, can verify how much or in which way he has modified his assumptions about those particular intentions he had in the past.

However, we cannot say that this is always the case. The utterer will not always alter his assumptions about his intentions with respect to a future time. Perhaps he looks over his notes more often so that the period of time between the writing and the reading is not so long as to allow considerable innovations in the utterer's assumptions. Or also, perhaps he does not forget, so that when he reads his notes again he does not find any "new" information at all, he does not find any alteration, any difference between assumptions to contrast. In this case, we could affirm that perhaps the utterer's intention is only to make sure that he is not going to forget.

Let us now take an example from group (b):

e5 John is rehearsing a speech for the opening of a new school. His intention is to inform his potential audience (mainly those parents whose children will attend the school) about the building, the facilities it has, the improvements made with respect to the old school, etc. John says to himself: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for coming and joining us..."

According to the formulation (d4), we obtain:

"John, by uttering 'Good evening... (x)', meant that 'I want to inform you about the new school... (p)'" is true if and only if:

(1) John uttered his speech intending it to be such that those who belong to the group of parents attending that ceremony then would think that:
(1.1) John intends his speech to be such that they (parents attending the ceremony) would think that John believes that he, John, wants to inform them about the new school...
(1.2) In view of (1.1) John believes that he wants to inform those who belong to the group of parents attending that ceremony about the new school...

And

(2) John uttered his speech intending it to be such that, should there actually be any of those who belong to the group of parents attending the ceremony, he would believe via (1.2) that John thinks that he wants to inform him about the new school...

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inference element e, John intends his speech to be such that those who belongs to the group of parents attending that ceremony will both:
(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that John thinks that he wants to inform them about the new school...'.
(3.2) Think that John intends his speech to be such that they (parents attending that ceremony) will come to think that John thinks that he wants to inform them about the new school...

Could the result obtained really count as an acceptable explanation for this sort of situation? That is, it is difficult to believe that, in view of the fact that John intends his speech to be such that any parent would think that he believes that he is informing them about the new school, John himself will believe that he thinks that he is informing them about the new school. Avramides points out that some philosophers[14], have rejected Grice's analysis because they believe that it does not reflect, in the right way, the phenomenology of language, which is, in their opinion, "habitual and unreflective". However, Grice's analysis gives us a different picture: the phenomenology of language appears to be extremely intricate:

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[14] Avramides mentions two, G. Evans and L. McDowell. Avramides 1989, p. 16.

> The phenomenology of language is habitual and unreflective, while the analysis is rather complex and suggests a highly reflective form of behaviour. (...) It can never be brought to square with how things seemed to the speaker at the time of speaking. (...) All Griceans accept the observation that the phenomenology of language is as McDowell and Evans describe. They would agree with their critics that the complexity reflected in their analysis is not matched by any conscious processes in speakers.[15]

Another interesting example of this group (b) is the case of the rehearsing of a play:

e6. S is rehearsing Hamlet: "To be or not to be..."

This example, on one hand, is in a way very similar to the previous one, but on the other hand is very different. The similarity is to be found in the fact that the actor is rehearsing his speech. We could say that he is doing so mainly to correct his performance, but not so much to inform people about Hamlet's thoughts. In the previous example, John pays attention to his performance as well, of course, but not in such a careful way as the actor does in this case, since it is his personal interpretation of the play that really matters here.

The point of dissimilarity is that now the actor does have an actual audience, and a very specific one: the director of that play. He is not the real intended audience, but at that particular moment of the rehearsing, the actor is not only contemplating his future spectators, but also his director, who is there, at the time of speaking. So, the actor is addressing his utterance to himself and to him as well. His director is going to pay much attention to his interpretation over all, without reflecting that much about the content, since the information which is being offered is already well known by both the utterer and the hearer. This is a very different kind of audience to the one expected on the day of the real performance. That day the audience will be made up of many different classes of spectators: some of them will specially stare at S's performance as well, some others will pay more attention to the content of the play, some others will concentrate on the setting, etc. So, we can see what happens if we apply (d4) regarding this possible future audience:

> "The actor, by uttering "To be or not to be... (x)", meant "To be or not to be... [and I am trying to feel and express all the emotions that a real Hamlet could feel in saying this, according to our point of view.] (p)" is true if and only if:

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[15] Avramides 1989, p.16.

(1) The actor uttered "To be or not to be..." intending this to be such that his possible spectators would think that:

(1.1) The actor intends "To be or not to be..." to be such that his possible spectators would think that the actor believes "To be or not to be... [and I am trying to feel and express...]".
(1.2) In view of (1.1), the actor believes "To be or not to be... [and I am trying to feel and express...]".

And

(2) The actor uttered "To be or not to be..." intending that, should there actually be anyone who is a possible spectator, he would, via (1.2), himself believe that "To be or not to be... [and I am trying to feel and express...]"

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inference element e, the actor intends "To be or not to be..." to be such that any possible spectator will both:
(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that "To be or not to be...[and I am trying to feel and express...]"
(3.2) Think that the actor intends "To be or not to be..." to be such that he (a possible spectator) will come to think that "To be or not to be...[and I am trying to feel and express...]" without relying on e

Again, we obtain a very complicated situation resulting from the application of Grice's formulation: the actor, in view of the fact that he intends his speech to be such that his possible spectators would think that he believes, not only what he says, but also that he is doing his best in interpreting those words, he will believe, not only what he says, but also that he is trying to do his best in interpreting those words. Although all Griceans recognise the complexity of the results obtained from the use of Grice's analysis, and accept the criticisms of it, as Avramides remarks, they also try to suggest different ways to solve this problem. Stephen Schiffer (1972) argues that, although ordinary linguistic behaviour is carried out quite unreflectively, the explanation of it is not necessarily simple and plain. It is, in this sense similar to the explanation of nonlinguistic behaviour: both of them are based on the exposition of "certain and in some cases highly complex beliefs, desires and intentions".[16] That is, in accounting for linguistic behaviour, some Griceans suggest that we should consider the possibility of attributing to the speaker some particular *tacit expectations* about his audience. In e6, the speaker's expectations about his audience are that they will think something analogous to the following: "(1.1) The actor intends his speech to be such that we will think that he believes the words he is reproducing, and also that he is doing his best in interpreting the play. (1.2) And in view of this, he believes the words he is reproducing. And (2)... And (3)...". The impression we can get after looking at all these complex 'tacit expectations' is that, according to this analysis, the utterer places on the hearer a very hard task, and in doing so, he greatly risks his success in communicating. The hearer is supposed to infer all those assumptions about the speaker's utterance.

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[16] Avramides 1989, p.14.

Let us move on to group (c). I would like to discuss here Grice's proposal for this kind of situation. The example given is that of soliloquizing. Can we really maintain that when an utterer talks to himself while thinking aloud, or when he writes some notes to clarify his ideas, if there are by chance people around , he utters x *with the intention* of producing some effect e on them, if his utterance wasn't really intended to be addressed to them? Or could we affirm that when he executes these actions, i.e., to think aloud or to write down clarifying notes, he does utter x, addressing it to himself, with the intention of producing the effect e in himself (the same effect e, which would be produced in a potential hearer if he would utter x in the appropriate circumstances...)?

To answer this second question, and in the particular case of writing down notes, we would have to return to the discussion about e4. Regarding that example, we considered the possibility that, perhaps, if the utterer kept his notes, he might review them after a time, and then he might find them "informative" in a sense. But if, as Stephen Schiffer takes his example[17] for this case, the utterer destroys his notes because he does intend to consult them, then we cannot preserve the following claim: that the utterer intends to produce in himself the effect e on the basis of the recognition of the fact that he intends to produce in himself the effect e (following the more basic formulation (d2)). And it is essential in this case to notice that:

> S's intention is to provide himself with various arguments, explanations, etc. In this type of case S does not have various arguments, etc., all worked out which he then can simply put on paper

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[17] The example about the philosopher, who is on his own, trying to solve some philosophical questions, and decides to write down some notes, as suggestions, objections, replies... He doesn't intend to discuss or share his notes with another person, and he doesn't either intend to review them at a future time. (Schiffer 1972, p. 77.)

> (...); rather, he puts various things on paper as part of a process toward arriving at a certain body of knowledge.[18]

But let us look at our own example of soliloquizing. According to (d4), we will obtain:

e7. Soliloquizing.i. John says to himself, "I'll do my washing tomorrow"

"S, by uttering "I'll do my washing tomorrow", meant, "I think it is better if I do my washing tomorrow" is true if and only if:

(1) John uttered "I'll do my washing tomorrow" intending this to be such that anyone who is not intended to be his hearer, and, by chance, happens to be around and hears him accidentally, would think that:

(1.1) John intends "I'll do my washing tomorrow" to be such that anyone who is not intended to be his hearer, and by chance happens to be around and hears him accidentally, would think that John believes, "I think it is better if I do my washing tomorrow".

(1.2) In view of (1.1) John believes, "I think it is better if I do my washing tomorrow".

And

(2) John uttered, "I'll do my washing tomorrow" intending that, should there actually be anyone who is not intended to be his hearer, and, by chance, happens be around and hears him accidentally, would via (1.2) himself believe that John thinks, "I think it is better if I do my washing tomorrow" p.

And

(3) It is not the case that, for some inference element e, John intends "I'll do my washing tomorrow" to be such that anyone who is not intended to be his hearer, and by chance happens to be around and hears him accidentally, will both:

(3.1) Rely on e in coming to believe that John thinks, "I think it is better if I do my washing tomorrow" p.

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[18] Schiffer 1972, p. 79.

(3.2) Think that John intends "I'll do my washing tomorrow" to be such that anyone who is not intended to be his hearer, and by chance happen to be around and hears him accidentally, will come to think that John thinks, "I think it is better if I do my washing tomorrow" without relying on e.

This time, the result appears to be somehow inconsistent: we have obtained the claim that the speaker, in view of the fact that he intends his utterance to be such that if anyone, who is not at all intended to be there, and paying any attention to him, hears him and consequently will believe what he says, the speaker himself will believe what he says.

Schiffer analyses another similar example: "A man, during his deliberations about whether to marry Rose, makes a list of her pros and cons. We might suppose that in writing 'She has halitosis' he meant that she had halitosis."[19]. He points out that this example is not at all a clear instance of "S meaning that p" because it does not seem to be the case that when the utterer wrote 'She has halitosis' he meant that she had halitosis. If what he wanted to do is to clarify his ideas to be able to take a decision, then it would have been the same to list all his thoughts together in his head and to utter them aloud. However, Noam Chomsky affirms with absolute certainty that:

> In the cases cited [audienceless cases], I, the speaker, have no intention of getting the hearer to know anything or to recognize anything, but what I say has its strict meaning, and I mean what I say.[20]

3 Relevance theory

Grice's analysis of "utterer's meaning" is defined in terms of the recognition and fulfilment of the utterer's intentions. However, Sperber and Wilson (1986) point out that successful communication is possible without all those different intentions being fulfilled. Let us consider again (d2):

> "S meant something by uttering x" is true if and only if, for some A, S uttered x intending:

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[19] Schiffer 1972, p. 77.

[20] Chomsky 1976, pp. 63-64.

(1) A to produce r.
(2) A to recognize that S intends A to produce r.
(3) A to produce r on the basis of A's recognition of the fact that S intends A to produce r.

According to Sperber and Wilson, only the fulfilment of intention (2) in Grice's analysis is essential to guarantee successful communication. Thus, (2) is the one which guarantees communication, i.e., (2) is the communicative intention, while (1) is the informative intention. They propose the following definitions for them:

> **Informative intention**: to inform the audience of something;
> **Communicative intention**: to inform the audience of one's informative intention.[21]

Regarding the definition of the informative intention, Sperber and Wilson take a different position from some pragmatists who consider it as the intention that the speaker has to induce in his hearer the belief that a certain proposition is true. In *Relevance*, they prefer to describe it as the speaker's intention to modify directly the cognitive environment of his hearer:[22]

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[21] Sperber and Wilson 1986, p.29.

[22] "The cognitive environment of an individual is a set of facts that are manifest to him", i.e. the set of facts that he can represent at that time, and accept their representation as true or probably true." Sperber and Wilson 1987, p. 699.

> A communicator produces a stimulus [23] intending thereby
> **Informative intention**: to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions {I}.[24]

This kind of behaviour is a part of what Sperber and Wilson call *ostension*, i.e. the behaviour which makes manifest the intention to make something manifest. However, ostensive communication involves more than the production of a stimulus with an informative intention. It also includes the intention to make it *mutually* manifest to audience and to communicator that the communicator has this informative intention. This is the *communicative intention*. Mutual manifestness is essential in social interaction, because, if the informative intention is made manifest only to the audience, only the audience's cognitive environment will be altered. On the other hand, when the informative intention is made mutually manifest to both audience and communicator, and not simply to the audience, the mutual cognitive environment of both audience and communicator is altered.

So, once the communicator has produced his stimulus, the audience's task is to *infer* what the communicator's intentions are. And thus we reach the final step in describing communication, which is to provide the proper definition of *ostensive-inferential communication*:

> The communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions {I}.[25]

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[23] "Grice and Strawson use the term 'utterance' to refer not just to linguistic utterances, or even to coded utterances, but to any modification of the physical environment designed by a communicator to be perceived by an audience and used as evidence of the communicator's intentions. This usage seems to us to induce a bias into the identification of communicative behaviour. It encourages the view that utterances in the usual linguistic sense can be taken as the paradigm of communicative behaviour in general. Psychologists use the term 'stimulus' for any modification of the physical environment designed to be perceived. We will do the same. An utterance in the usual sense is, of course, a special case of a stimulus." Sperber and Wilson, p. 29.

[24] Sperber and Wilson 1986, p. 58.

[25] Sperber and Wilson 1986, p.63.

According to relevance theory, we can propose a different way of analysing this sort of utterance. We do not have to build a whole formula (such as the one which Grice provides) applicable to every specific situation. On the contrary, what relevance theory offers us is a reduced set of clear ideas, which will enable us to handle the problems here presented.

Relevance theory is based on the following simple assumptions: any speaker, when offering information to his audience, is requesting their attention. In doing so, the utterer is indicating that the information which he is providing is relevant enough to be worth his audience's attention. What he is doing is creating expectations of relevance. This assumption is a basic notion in the study of human cognition: we pay attention to what we presume is relevant for us.

When we receive a new piece of information, it will be relevant for us if it interacts with a context of already existing assumptions about the world. This new information can interact in three different ways:

a. Strengthening an already existing assumption. The more assumptions it strengthens, and the more it strengthens them, the greater its relevance will be.

b. Contradicting and eliminating an existing assumption. Similarly, the more assumptions it eliminates, and the stronger there were, the greater its relevance will be.

c. Combining with this context of assumptions, creating in this way new contextual implications, i.e. a logical implications which cannot be derived from the new information alone, or from the context alone. To be derived, they need the combination of both the new information and the context. Again, the more contextual implications it creates, the greater its relevance will be.

The results of the interactions of new information, relevant information, with the contexts of those existing assumptions are the contextual effects achieved in those contexts. Thus, the greater the contextual effects achieved by the interaction of a new information, obviously, the greater its relevance will be.

But this is not all. There is another key aspect to be kept in mind when considering utterances. The speaker is supposed to make his utterances clear to follow, simple to process, easy to understand, so that the contextual effects to be derived by the audience will cost them the least possible effort. This effort required to obtain contextual effects is affected by three factors:

a. The linguistic structure of the utterance and its processing complexity.

b. The size and accessibility of the context in which the utterance is to be processed.

c. The inferential task of producing the contextual effects of the utterance in that context.

Thus, any speaker, trying to be relevant enough to be worth the hearer's attention, will intend that the interpretation chosen from the set of all different possible interpretations available for his utterance, will, on one hand, yield enough contextual effects, and will, on the other hand, save the hearer unnecessary effort in recovering the intended effects. This is an optimally relevant utterance: one which is likely to bring about an adequate improvement of knowledge at minimal processing cost. Any increase in processing effort will mean a decrease of the overall relevance, and, consequently, the lesser the effort required in processing the utterance, the greater the relevance achieved. The speaker, then, in his aim to be relevant enough, should try to choose the utterance the intended interpretation of which will be the first acceptable one to be recovered by the hearer.

As we have said, when the speaker produces his utterance, he is creating in his audience expectations of *relevance*. Sperber and Wilson, then, propose a definition of what they call the *principle of relevance*, which simply elucidates the basic notion of relevance: every utterance creates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.[26]

The notion of Optimal relevance, which, in turn, is intended to explain what the audience looks for in terms of *effort and effect*, it is defined according to these two factors mentioned above:

a. The contextual effects achieved, in interpreting the utterance, must be enough to make the utterance worth the audience's attention, and

b. The interpreting of that utterance and the recovery of those effects should not cost the audience any unjustifiable effort.

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[26] The Principle of Relevance must not be confused with a Gricean principle or maxim, because it is not a rule to be followed by speakers during conversation. It is not a principle which may or may not be obeyed, broken or violated. It is simply a descriptive principle, which explains what happens when we decide to communicate in any way. Communicators do not need to know about it to hold conversations since every utterance creates such presumptions of relevance even if communicators don't want to.

All this does not mean that every single utterance addressed to an audience has to be optimally relevant to be properly understood. Not all utterances satisfy the expectation of relevance. That is, the utterer may intend to produce an utterance which, he thinks, will yield sufficient contextual effects costing the minimum effort to his audience, but this does not mean that he will actually achieve it. To account for these facts, Sperber and Wilson propose a *criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance*: any utterance, on a given interpretation, is consistent with the principle of relevance if and only if the utterer could have rationally expected it to be optimally relevant to the hearer on that interpretation. And if the hearer, in processing the utterance, reaches an interpretation which fulfils this expectation, he takes it, without trying any other, as the interpretation intended by the utterer.

4 Relevance and utterances in the absence of an audience

How could we explain all those cases we have been analysing so far, within a relevance-theory framework? How can these utterances achieve relevance? The starting point is that the speaker, by the act of claiming his audience's attention, suggests that the information he is offering is relevant enough to be worth his audience's attention. But what happens when there is no such audience?

Let us start with e2. The question is: How can a public notice such as "Keep off the grass" achieve relevance? This notice, like many others, is supposed to be permanently visible tp any one who may walk in the park, and can then receive the information that the gardener believes to be essential for the public to know. That is the gardener's intention. The linguistic form he has chosen for his utterance is that of an imperative sentence. Speakers of the English language know that the best way, in terms of clarity, simplicity, and directness, to get people to do something (or in this case not to do something) is by giving a command.

The contextual effects yielded by the interpretation of that utterance in its appropriate context, a context in which we could have the following assumptions:

a. that we do not usually step on the grass,
b. parks usually have paths to avoid people stepping on the grass,
c. grass is to be visually appreciated,
d. if people step on the grass, parks lose part of their beauty, etc..,

will satisfy the expectation of relevance: it is absolutely clear that it is prohibited to step on the grass. And the effort that the eventual possible audience will have to make in order to interpret the utterance in that context is minimal.

As we have said, public notices are normally permanently visible. As Sperber and Wilson explain [27], public signs, notices, etc. are ostensive stimuli, and their exhibition "constitutes an act of communication", even in those cases in which they happen not to be read by anyone, since they make manifest a certain set of assumptions. That is, they can modify the cognitive environment of anyone who might read them, by making them capable of identifying the communicator's intentions to inform. In our example, those intentions are the gardener's intentions to inform any visitor of the park that he doesn't want anybody to step on the grass.

Once we have seen public notices, interpreted them in a specific context, achieved the intended contextual effects, etc., once public notices have made manifest to us a set of facts (i.e., we can represent them mentally and accept their representation as true or probably true), do they lose their relevance, when we see them again and again? The answer we would say is no. Public notices, as is known, have, at least, two functions. One, they spread information about things, facts, ideas, events, etc. And two, they are used to remind people about those things, facts, ideas, events, which they already know, but can be easily forgotten, and are useful or interesting to keep in mind. They refresh and reinforce our knowledge about whatever they refer to. That is, they make more manifest to the audience the set of assumptions intended to be communicated in the appropriate context.

So, when we receive that information the first time, it counts as new information. It will then be processed in a specific context, interacting with it, maybe strengthening already existing assumptions about the prohibition on trampling grass, or maybe contradicting and eliminating existing assumptions about the possibility of walking on the grass in that park, and yielding contextual implications.

But when we see the notice again, we do not receive new information. The contextual implications yielded before are now accessed as contextual assumptions in which the interpretation of the utterance will work. And also we will access the assumption that public notices have that second mission of reinforcement. So relevance is to be found in that double strengthening of the already existing assumptions, in the fact of making more manifest the set of assumptions intended to be communicated. Sperber and Wilson refer to these cases as reminders, pointing out that they are relevant in the sense that they save processing effort in achieving certain contextual effects:

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[27] Sperber and Wilson 1987, p. 740.

> A reminder is relevant only in contexts which do not contain the information in question: its function is to make this information accessible at a smaller processing cost than would be needed to obtain it by successive extensions of the context.[28]

The contextual effects that reminders yield can be obtained in a different way, but not so quickly and with greater effort: the effort needed to retrieve some assumptions from the memory can be greater than the effort needed to retrieve the same information from the interpretation of the public sign.

Let us now consider e4 (diary notations) and take it as Schiffer analyses it, as a case of private reminders. We will suppose that the speaker, when he reviews his notes at a particular future time, has a different sort of mental state: his set of assumptions referring to those specific intentions which he had in the past has now changed.

In this case, we assume that the utterer is addressing his utterance to himself as a reminder of something which he thinks he is likely to forget. This is a case similar to e2 in that the relevance of the utterance is in the double strengthening of the already existing assumptions.

In e1, the case of "the sleeping beauty", we find that the utterance is a very clear one. This time we have not a command, but a polite, clear and simple request. According to relevance theory [29], requests describe states of affairs which are represented as desirable from the speaker's point of view. The speaker has fulfilled the criterion of consistency with the principle of optimal relevance, since, in choosing this linguistic form (the imperative), the interpretation to be recovered by his audience will be the one intended by the speaker and it will produce enough contextual effects with a minimum cost of effort. Then, if H successfully infers the assumption that the speaker's request has been motivated by his intention to achieve a desirable state of affairs (which is clearly desirable for the speaker, but not for the hearer), S will have succeeded in his informative intention. And he has also been successful in his communicative intention, since, as we saw before, the fact of using a "public sign", to make manifest his intention to inform people about certain assumptions, constitutes a case of communication. Obviously, for many reasons, there is no guarantee that he will prosper in his achievement of that desirable state of affairs: perhaps there are no other passengers who will travel as far as he does, so that they will not be able to wake him up; or perhaps the other passengers simply refuse to wake him up, since they will not obtain any benefit at all from performing the action requested (even though both communicator and audience will probably share a cognitive environment in which there is set of assumptions referring to some social well-established conventions about polite cooperation between human beings).

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[28] Sperber and Wilson 1986, pp. 142-143.

[29] Sperber and Wilson 1986, p. 251.

In e2, as in this example, we have another case of a request: the gardener is informing the visitors to the park about his particular thoughts, which describe a certain state of affairs that is not only desirable for him, but also desirable for the audience: they will receive the benefits of the gardener's request, since they will not enjoy the park so much as if the grass is not kept in perfect condition. In this way, it is important for the communicator to make sure that he has chosen the linguistic form which will guarantee that his intention is properly inferred, and on the other hand, it is important for the audience to recover the intended interpretation of the utterance and identify it in the same way that the gardener means: as a description of a state of affairs that is desirable for them. In this way, the communicator has many chances of succeeding in his request.

In e5 (the speaker is rehearsing a speech) we have the case of an utterance which is neither addressed to an actual audience nor to the utterer himself. It is intended to be addressed to a particular kind of audience that will be present at a certain future time. The utterer is repeating to himself what he already knows. He is reproducing a bit of knowledge to achieve what? His aim in rehearsing his speech is to check, on one hand, that the information he is going to offer to his audience is correct, and, on the other hand, that he is going to present it in the best way, so that the expectations of relevance created in his future audience will be fulfilled. That is, in rehearsing his utterance he is investigating those factors mentioned above, which are to be considered when calculating the effort needed to achieve the intended contextual effects:

a. That the linguistic forms used are not too complex for his audience to process.

b. That the intended context in which the new information is to be processed, is equally accessible for all parents.

c The inferential task of deriving the intended contextual effects do not involve unnecessary effort.

We could say then that he is trying to play both his role of communicator and that of the audience. In trying to play the role of his future audience, the most he can do is to figure out which kind of assumptions the people in the audience will probably entertain when they listen to his speech. The communicator will try to make sure that they share a cognitive environment which he will try to modify, by making manifest, or more manifest, to them a certain set of assumptions. He can also try to imagine what kind of contextual implications his audience can derive. This is extremely difficult, considering how many different minds will process his utterance. But, at least, he will try to make sure that in every particular bunch of contextual implications derived by every member of his audience, there will be those which he really intends. At this point we connect with the notion of *interpretative use*, proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986). According to them,

> Any object in the world can, under the appropriate conditions, be used as a representation of some other object that it resembles.[30]

Correspondingly, any utterance can be used as a representation of some other utterance, if they have equivalent propositional content. We can say that the first utterance is *an interpretation* of the second one, if they share *contextual implications*. From this point, then, is easy to see that, in a similar way, every utterance is ultimately an interpretation of some thoughts of the speaker. Those thoughts of the speaker, in turn, can represent a description of an actual state of affairs, or of a desirable state of affairs, as we saw when we were dealing with requests.

Thus, in our example, the speaker's speech constitutes an interpretation of his own thoughts, which describe an actual state of affairs, i.e. the information about the new school. The speaker is, by addressing his speech to himself, interpreting his own thoughts. The interpretation can be fully literal (FLI), if he tries to *reproduce* his thoughts, which include a whole list of changes, with details, measurements, and figures. But, perhaps he realizes that the FLI is not the optimally relevant one (he doesn't want to bore his audience by giving them too many details about some aspects which are not essential), so he reduces the body of facts to be reported. This version is still a literal interpretation (LI) of his thoughts, since the propositions expressed are logically implied by the FLI of his thoughts.

Another possibility is that the speaker may decide to include in his report some implications of the facts that he intends to inform about. For instance, that the students will be able to rehearse for swimming contests -as a consequence of having enlarged the swimming pool. This is a contextual implication easily derivable from the FLI of the thoughts of the speaker, which contain the whole information about the school. If both speaker and audience share a cognitive environment which includes some assumptions about swimming, swimming pools and swimming contests, and if both speaker and audience know that they share those assumptions, then the inclusion of this contextual implication in the speech is relevant and will be of use to inform about the changes made in the sport facilities, even if the report doesn't include the exact details.

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[30] Sperber and Wilson 1987, p. 707.

Finally, the speaker, with the intention of giving a very good impression of the new appearance of the swimming pool, may exaggerate a little bit and say that "now, with the new one, the students will be able to practise for all the water sports for the next Olympic Games". This is not part of the FLI of the thoughts of the speaker, and it is not logically or contextually implied by the FLI of his thoughts in any context accessible to both speaker and audience. This less-than-literal interpretation of the thoughts of the speaker will then, in a way, resemble the FLI, and it will may also produce some other contextual implications that could not be derivable from the FLI. On the other hand, his audience will not expect that he will subscribe to all the possible implications that are derivable from his utterance. The speaker will only be expected to subscribe to those that will make his utterance consistent with the principle of relevance.

All these are approximately the possibilities that the speaker has. He can choose the one that he thinks is optimally relevant, according to whichever he presumes his audience will prefer.

The case in e6 (the actor rehearsing) is also a case of interpretive use, obviously. The difference with e5 is that the speech is already fixed. The actor cannot change the content of his utterance, to make it more or less amusing to his audience. He has to interpret a fixed utterance, which is not an interpretation of his own thoughts, but an interpretation of the thoughts of another speaker. But in interpreting that utterance, he will try to describe an actual state of affairs, i.e., that he believes the propositional content of what he is uttering. His future audience obviously will know that he is not the real Hamlet, that he is merely interpreting Shakespeare's words put as Hamlet's own thoughts, but the actor is trying as much as possible to utter those same words in a way that, when the day of his real performance comes, he will utter them with the intention of informing his audience about his "supposed" actual thoughts and feelings. He is also taking the role of his future audience, trying to check that what he addresses to himself sounds to him (and should sound to his spectators at that future time) as an authentic description of an actual state of affairs.

Finally, in e7 (soliloquizing), we have a case of a speaker addressing his utterance to himself, with no intention of informing any actually present or future audience about anything at all. Is he, then, informing himself about the fact that he thinks that it is better for him to do his washing whenever he prefers? Is he, then, informing himself about his own informative intention? In this case, the speaker's utterance can be described as a simple reproduction of his own thoughts, an exact and faithful representation of the assumptions that he is entertaining at that particular time. They are part of the thinking process, and the speaker, in uttering those words, has no intention at all of informing anyone or informing himself. Or in Chomsky's words:

> Meaningful use of language need not involve communication or even the attempt to communicate, as when I use language to express or clarify my thoughts, with the intent to deceive, to avoid an embarrassing silence, or in a dozen other ways.[31]

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[31] Chomsky 1976, p. 61.

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